

Message Text

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 548 - APRIL 21, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

WARNING NOTICE SENSITIVE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED NOT
RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. LEBANON. SOUTHERN LEBANON CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE MINOR FIRING INCIDENTS BETWEEN PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI ELEMENTS EVEN THOUGH UNIFIL IS EXPANDING ITS OPERATIONS THERE. THERE ARE NOW APPROXIMATELY 2,400 UNIFIL TROOPS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION. A BATTALION EACH OF SENEGALESE AND NIGERIANS, TOTALING SOME 1,300 MEN, IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN THE NEXT 10 DAYS. FOR THE MOST PART, UN TROOPS HAVE RESPONDED FORCEFULLY TO INCIDENTS OCCURRING WITHIN THEIR AREAS OF CONTROL. ON A NUMBER OF RECENT OCCASIONS UNIFIL TURNED BACK ARMED PALESTINIANS ATTEMPTING TO ENTER THROUGH THEIR LINES. SHOULD THE PALESTINIANS, HOWEVER, MAKE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO PENETRATE OR DISLODGE THE UN FORCES, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE ORIGINAL PROJECTED FORCE OF 4,000 MEN

COULDBE ADEQUATE TO HANDLE THE SITUATION. REALIZING THIS, THE UN SECRETARIAT IS APPARENTLY PLANNING TO RAISE THE FORCE LEVEL TO 6,000.

2. DURING HIS VISITS IN THE MIDEAST THIS WEEK UN SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM QUITE LIKELY USED THE ISSUE OF INCREASING
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UN FORCE TOTALS TO ENCOURAGE BOTH THE ISRAELIS TO EXPEDITE THEIR WITHDRAWAL AND THE LEBANESE TO INTRODUCE ARMY TROOPS INTO THE SOUTH. TEL AVIV REPORTEDLY HAS REASSURED WALDHEIM THAT IT INTENDS TO WITHDRAW FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON AND WILL VACATE APPROXIMATELY 50 PERCENT OF OCCUPIED TERRITORY WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. SUCH A PULLBACK WOULD LEAVE CHRISTIAN AND SHIA MUSLIM AREAS ALONG THE BORDER UNDER IDF OCCUPATION. ISRAEL WILL QUITE LIKELY DEMAND REASSURANCES FOR THE SAFETY OF CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES BEFORE RECALLING ALL ITS FORCES.

3. WALDHEIM WAS APPARENTLY LESS SUCCESSFUL IN GAINING COMMITMENTS FROM THE BEIRUT GOVERNMENT. LEBANESE ARMY COMMANDER KHOURY HAS FOR THE PAST YEAR ARGUED THAT THE INITIAL DEPLOYMENT OF HIS NEWLY REBUILT ARMY MUST NOT FAIL AND HE, THEREFORE, WILL NOT COMMIT AN ILL-PREPARED FORCE. REPORTEDLY, HE TOLD WALDHEIM THAT HIS FORCES WERE NOT PREPARED TO GO SOUTH BUT THAT ADDITIONAL GENDARMERIE WOULD BE SENT TO HELP ESTABLISH A NATIONAL PRESENCE THERE.

4. EMBASSY DAMASCUS OBSERVES THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD, DESPITE ACUTE EMBARRASSMENT, REFUSED TO BE DRAWN INTO A CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL DURING ITS INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON. ASSAD HAD WARNED THE PLO GUERRILLA GROUPS THAT THEIR REFUSAL TO IMPLEMENT THE SHTAWRAH AGREEMENT MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR SYRIAN FORCES TO OFFER THEM PROTECTION. THE EMBASSY COMMENTS THAT WHILE SYRIA NOW HAS A SOMEWHAT

STRONGER HAND TO PLAY IN ITS DEALINGS WITH THE PLO, FOR NOW ASSAD IS UNLIKELY TO MOVE HIS FORCES TO THE LITANI SINCE HE STILL NEEDS THE PLO'S SUPPORT IN HIS INTRA-ARAB STRUGGLE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ISRAELI INVASION FURTHER STRAINED SYRIAN RELATIONS WITH THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS. (SECRET/NOFORN)

5. WEST BANK. THERE HAS BEEN AN UPSWING IN ANTI-ISRAELI ACTIVITY AND INCIDENTS ON THE WEST BANK IN RECENT WEEKS.
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THIS SITUATION REFLECTS FRUSTRATION OVER THE STATUS OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE, THE ISRAELI INCURSION INTO LEBANON, BEGIN'S INTERPRETATION OF RESOLUTION 242, AND THE RESUMPTION OF SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION.

6. THE MOST OBVIOUS MANIFESTATION OF THIS FRUSTRATION HAS BEEN THE SPORADIC OUTBREAKS OF RIOTING THIS WEEK. THE DEMONSTRATIONS RESULTED IN THE KILLING OF ONE WEST BANK YOUTH BY ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES. THE DEATH MAY FUEL MORE DISTURBANCES OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, ALTHOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WILL REACH THE SCALE OF THE RIOTS IN 1976.

7. MORE TROUBLING HAVE BEEN THE TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN RECENT WEEKS AGAINST ISRAELI SOLDIERS AND VEHICLES. ONE ISRAELI RESERVIST HAS BEEN KILLED AND AT LEAST FOUR INJURED. THESE ACTIONS SEEM TO BE AN OUTGROWTH OF PERCEIVED VULNERABILITY SHOWN BY THE IDF IN THE INVASION OF SOUTHERN LEBANON WHICH MAY HAVE NOW EMBOLDENED WEST BANK TERRORISTS TO CONFRONT THE ISRAELI MILITARY DIRECTLY. WE SUSPECT THAT THESE NEW TACTICS OF SPECIFICALLY ATTACKING THE ISRAELI MILITARY WILL CONTINUE, GIVEN THE "SUCCESS", FROM THE PALESTINIAN PERSPECTIVE, OF THE RECENT ATTACKS.

8. FEAR AMONG WEST BANKERS THAT BEGIN MAY MOVE TO IMPOSE HIS SELF-RULE SCHEME PROBABLY HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE CURRENT ANTI-ISRAELI ACTIVITY. HEBRON'S MAYOR QAWASIMA RECENTLY ALLEGED THAT THE "UNPRECEDENTED CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION AND PROVOCATION" WAS A PRELUDE TO THE IMPOSITION OF BEGIN'S PLAN. OUR JERUSALEM CONSULATE GENERAL NOTED THAT, WHILE QAWASIMA'S FEARS CAN BE DISCOUNTED, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HEAVY-HANDED IN ITS TREATMENT OF WEST BANKERS, INCLUDING AN INCREASE IN
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ARBITRARY DETENTIONS AND FINES.

9. DESPITE THE ANTI-ISRAELI FERMENT WEST BANK THINKING ON THE PEACE PROCESS HAS CONTINUED TO EVOLVE. ORIGINALLY

SPARKED BY THE PROSPECT OF PEACE IN THE WAKE OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE, SEVERAL PROMINENT WEST BANKERS OF VARYING POLITICAL PERSUASIONS IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE DEVELOPED FURTHER IDEAS. THESE IDEAS INCLUDE THE USUAL MAXIMALIST POSITIONS, SUCH AS TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK, GAZA, AND EAST JERUSALEM, AND THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH A PLEBISCITE, INCLUDING AN OPTION FOR A WHOLLY INDEPENDENT STATE.

10. ON THE OTHER HAND, THESE LEADERS HAVE BEGUN TO FORMULATE SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND SEEM WILLING TO ACCEPT CONCEPTS THEY WOULD HAVE OPPOSED EARLIER. AMONG THESE ARE AN INTERIM TRANSITIONAL PERIOD BEFORE A PLEBISCITE; ADMINISTRATION OF THE WEST BANK DURING THAT PERIOD OF TIME BY AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP, PERHAPS A US-JORDANIAN-EGYPTIAN COMMISSION; AND NO SPECIFIC CLAIMS WITHIN

ISRAEL WITHIN ISRAEL PROPER. MORE IMPORTANT, THEIR WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT FOR THE PLO AS THE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF WEST BANKERS SEEMS TO HAVE DIMINISHED SLIGHTLY. MOST WEST BANKERS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT YET PREPARED TO ASSUME A ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS IN PLACE OF THE PLO. (SECRET)

11. ISRAEL. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT THE ISRAELI PRESS IS PLAYING UP THE EXPULSION OF A CONGEN JERUSALEM OFFICER FROM A WEST BANK SETTLEMENT. THE EMBASSY NOTES THAT A DISTURBING ASPECT OF THE WIDE COVERAGE IS THE LINKAGE MADE TO ALL US GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR RELATIONS WITH THE WEST BANK. THE EMBASSY SUSPECTS THAT ELEMENTS IN THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, WHO WERE CLEARLY THE SOURCE OF THE STORY, HAVE LEAKED A DISTORTED AND
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TENDENTIOUS VERSION OF THE INCIDENT TO REITERATE SOME OF THEIR LONG-STANDING CRITICISMS OF US-WEST BANK RELATIONS.

12. EMBASSY TEL AVIV ALSO REPORTS THAT IN RETROSPECT THE APRIL 15 "SECURE PEACE" DEMONSTRATION HAS HAD A REMARKABLY LIMITED IMPACT ON POLITICAL THINKING IN ISRAEL. THIS IS EXPLAINED BY THE FACT THAT THIS SELF-PROCLAIMED MOVEMENT IS LITTLE MORE THAN A REFLEX ACTION TO "PEACE NOW." UNLIKE "PEACE NOW", "SECURE PEACE" IS NOT A VEHICLE FOR POLITICAL EXPRESSION BY A GROUP WHICH FEELS UNREPRESENTED. "PEACE NOW'S" FORTUNES WILL TO A GREAT EXTENT BE DETERMINED BY INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS. SO FAR, THE TWO MOVEMENTS HAVE NOT POLOARIZED ISRAEL TO ANY SIGNIFICANT DEGREE.

13. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S ECONOMIC REFORM PROGRAM HAS WEATHERED A CRITICAL PERIOD WITH THE NEGOTIATION OF COMPARATIVELY MODERATE WAGE GUIDELINES BY BUSINESS AND

LABOR LEADERS. AN AGREEMENT SIGNED LATE LAST MONTH PROVIDES FOR WAGE INCREASES OF 15 TO 16 PERCENT AND COVERS MOST OF THE PRIVATE LABOR FORCE. THE HISTADRUT LABOR FEDERATION AND THE GOVERNMENT ALSO AGREED IN PRINCIPLE LAST WEEK TO A SIMILAR INCREASE FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR. SOME MILITANT UNIONS, ESPECIALLY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR HIGHER WAGE SETTLEMENTS.

14. THE GOVERNMENT GAVE IN PARTIALLY TO HISTADRUT DEMANDS FOR A FREEZE ON COMMODITY PRICES AND ON GOVERNMENT UTILITY AND PUBLIC SERVICE CHARGES AND FOR A TEMPORARY HALT TO REDUCTIONS IN GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES. EARLIER THIS MONTH, TEL AVIV ANNOUNCED A SIX-MONTH FREEZE ON PRICES OF SUBSIDIZED FOOD COMMODITIES AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

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15. THE PRICE FREEZES AND THE 15 TO 16 PERCENT WAGE INCREASES WILL HELP SLOW INFLATION, WHICH AVERAGED 35 PERCENT LAST YEAR. THE INFLATIONARY SURGE THAT FOLLOWED INTRODUCTION OF BEGIN'S ECONOMIC REFORM PROGRAM IN OCTOBER WAS PARTICULARLY STRONG AND RESULTED IN ONE OF THE STEEPEST DECLINES IN REAL WAGES IN RECENT ISRAELI HISTORY. THE NEW WAGE AGREEMENT LEAVES SOME ROOM FOR REAL WAGE GAINS DURING THE REMAINDER OF THIS YEAR.
(CONFIDENTIAL) CHRISTOPHER

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